



## Department of Veterans Affairs

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### **Veterans Service Officers Recognized for Their Service to South Dakota's Veterans**

PIERRE, S.D. – County and tribal veterans' service officers (CTVSO) and staff from the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA) were recognized for their dedication to serving veterans and veterans' families at an awards program Monday, Aug. 25, in Pierre.

The annual event, organized by the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, was held in conjunction with the veterans' benefits training conference for CTVSOs. This year's week-long conference included National Accreditation Training and had 156 attendees from South Dakota, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Texas, Virginia and Wyoming.

"Bringing NACVSO training to South Dakota for the Department's annual training certification school is a monumental event," said SDDVA Deputy Secretary Pollard. "We continue to build and strengthen the relationship that we share with our county and tribal partners."

"The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs and our VSOs are here to serve all veterans from every conflict and every generation who have defended our nation and the American way of life," said Larry Zimmerman, SDDVA Secretary. "It is important to recognize individuals who provide outstanding service. Working together, we will continue to be the voice for South Dakota's veterans and their families and we will reach all of them."

Gordon Richard of Redfield received the CTVSO of the Year Award, which distinguishes Gordon as the 2014 County Veterans Service Officer of the Year. As the VSO for Spink County, Gordon was recognized for his outstanding commitment to veterans, communication with veterans, outreach coordination and leadership in bringing the national training to South Dakota.

Tom Sparrow of Marion received the Outreach of the Year Award, which distinguishes Tom as the 2014 leader in conducting outreach activities. As the VSO for Turner County, Tom was recognized for his outstanding commitment to veterans, coordination of outreach events and leadership in Operation RAV (Reaching all Veterans).

Audry Ricketts, SDDVA public information officer was awarded the SDDVA 2014 Employee of the Year Award. Ricketts was recognized for her commitment to their partners, her leadership and her communication skills.

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Jamie Guffey, veterans services caseworker for the Pennington County VSO office, was awarded the 2014 Partner of the Year Award. Guffey was recognized for her compassion, commitment, knowledge and professionalism when assisting South Dakota's veterans.

Former VSO's Tom Gohn (Brown County), Robert Arneson (Hamlin County), Charles Haffner (Yankton County), Don Thomson (Lake County), Archie Hopkins (Oglala Sioux Tribe) and Larry Person (SDDVA) were recognized by the County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers Association for their years of service to South Dakota's veterans.

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(Photos available upon request)